

# M I C H I G A N Agriculture News



STATE SENATOR 16th District

## Cameron Brown

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Dear Friend of Agriculture:

As Chair of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, I am aware of the crucial role that agriculture plays in Michigan's economy. In a time when other industries are struggling, it is encouraging to know that Michigan agriculture remains comparatively strong and stable. We must encourage its growth and prosperity.

Agriculture contributes significantly to the quality of life in our state and especially in the 16th Senate District. I will continue my best efforts to advocate on behalf of the agricultural community. If there is any way I can be of assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me toll-free at 866-305-0316 or by e-mail at [sencbrown@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:sencbrown@senate.michigan.gov).

Best wishes for a productive and prosperous season!

Sincerely,

Cameron Brown  
State Senator  
16th District

### 2002 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE 16th District Profile

Number of farms: .....5,007

Land in Farms: .....1,117,406 acres

Market Value of Production: .....\$341,982,000

Top Livestock Inventory Items: .....Hogs & Pigs  
Cattle & Calves

Top Crop Items: .....Soybeans  
Corn for Grain



# SENATOR BROWN SUPPORTS RENEWABLE FUELS PACKAGE

Our agricultural economy will get a lift from new laws designed to increase the use of alternative energy in Michigan. House and Senate Republicans spearheaded the effort to encourage the development and use of renewable fuels such as ethanol and biodiesel. The measures establish a wide range of tax incentives along with a provision to create new renaissance zones for the manufacture of alternative energy.

Ethanol is a clean-burning, high-octane fuel primarily produced from corn. Biodiesel is a cleaner burning diesel fuel made from natural products like soybean oil. Corn and soybeans are among Michigan's top commodities. Approximately 1.9 million acres of corn is harvested annually in Michigan.

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Four ethanol plants are currently up and running including Albion, Lake Odessa, Caro and Riga Township in Lenawee County. A plant is under construction in Marysville. Other plants, including one in Reading, are also under discussion.

I wholeheartedly supported the plan to encourage development of renewable fuels in Michigan. In fact, I sponsored PA 271 of 2006 which created a comprehensive program and standards for diesel and biodiesel fuels sold in Michigan.

As the center of automotive technology and a leader in agricultural research, I believe Michigan is well positioned to take the lead and capitalize on renewable energy fuels and technologies. This legislation is a good start, but more can be done to promote renewable fuels in Michigan.

## Value-Added Agriculture Receives a Boost

The agriculture industry will have greater access to money in the 21st Century Jobs Fund under Senate legislation signed into law. The new laws help promote value-added opportunities.

A new requirement calls for the Department of Agriculture to hold a commercialization roundtable to promote agricultural innovation and ways to infuse capital into value-added ventures. Another measure expands the Agriculture Development Fund to a grant and loan program instead of grant only to help more businesses launch new products or expand their operation.

Examples of value-added agriculture include agri-tourism, direct-farm marketing, food processing, or producing specialty products. Michigan produces over 125 raw commodities, second in diversity only to California. Michigan's diversity increases tenfold by taking those raw commodities and adding value to them through further processing and marketing.

# SENATE ENCOURAGES AG FACILITY EXPANSION

Agriculture is the state's second leading industry and one of the lifelines for Michigan's economic vitality. Senate legislation I supported to help our agricultural industry grow and expand jobs has now been signed into law. Public Act 284 of 2006 creates ten new agriculture processing renaissance zones in Michigan. Facilities in these areas are exempt from all state and local taxes for up to 15 years.

Under the new law, the state must consider these criteria when awarding an agriculture processing renaissance zone:

- Economic impact on local suppliers;
- Creation of jobs;
- Viability of the project;
- Economic impact on the community.

In addition, at least half of the new renaissance zones must be located in rural areas.

This new law will open the door for more agriculture facilities to expand their processing operations and help farmers stay competitive. Find out more information on renaissance zones at [www.michigan.org/medc/services/sitedevelopment/renzone/](http://www.michigan.org/medc/services/sitedevelopment/renzone/).



## SENATOR BROWN SUPPORTS ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

### *New Law Promotes Efficiency and Environmental Stewardship*

A Senate bill I sponsored was signed into law last year to provide assistance to farmers and food processors to help make operations cleaner and more efficient, and generate renewable energy. Under Public Act 254 of 2006, eligible farmers can obtain loans of up to \$200,000 to build agricultural energy production systems, which often have high start-up costs that can run as much as \$2 million.

Methane digesters, one of the most common types of these energy systems, process animal waste using treatment technology that yields methane gas, and at the same time reduces the volume of solids and liquids. Harmful pathogens are neutralized and odors are eliminated. Other systems covered by the new law include biomass gasification and thermal depolymerization.

The energy produced can be used to generate electricity for the farm operation.

Senate Republicans worked tirelessly with industry groups to bring this legislation to fruition. You can find information on the loan program at [www.michigan.gov/deq](http://www.michigan.gov/deq). Click on "Pollution Prevention" on the left sidebar to access the Small Business Pollution Prevention Loan Program.

## MICHIGAN EXPORTS

The MDA International and New Market Development Program provides services that help Michigan food and agricultural firms initiate or expand their international and domestic markets. Visit the website at [www.michigan.gov/mda](http://www.michigan.gov/mda) to access a wealth of resources, including trade leads and trade show information. Click on Michigan Marketplace on the left sidebar.

### **Michigan's Top Five Agricultural Exports 2005:**

Soybeans and products — **\$222 million**  
Feed grains and products — **\$163 million**  
Vegetables — **\$152 million**  
Dairy products — **\$66 million**  
Wheat and products — **\$60 million**

USDA, Foreign Agricultural Service, August 2006





**State Senator Cameron Brown**

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### **Agricultural Tourism Report Available**

Agricultural tourism is growing as a source of income for many family farms and as a way to preserve valuable farmland. The Michigan Agricultural Tourism Advisory Commission recently issued a final report with recommendations to help support and promote this important industry. You can view the report along with a local zoning guidebook online at [www.michigan.gov/mda](http://www.michigan.gov/mda).

The commission was created by legislation that I sponsored in 2005 with one of the primary purposes to study the impact of local zoning. The group was also charged with looking at ways farmers can expand agriculture tourism opportunities. The Michigan Department of Agriculture estimates that there are well over 2,000 such businesses in the state.

### **Mandatory Cattle ID Program In Effect**

Electronic identification ear tags are now mandatory statewide for movement of cattle from farms effective March 1, 2007. Cattle must be tagged if they are leaving the farm to be sold or changing ownership. For more information, or to check for updates on the program, go to [www.michigan.gov/mda](http://www.michigan.gov/mda) or [www.michigananimalid.com](http://www.michigananimalid.com).

### **Resources for Agriculture**

Michigan Department of Agriculture  
[www.michigan.gov/mda](http://www.michigan.gov/mda)

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
[www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov)

Agricultural Statistics Service  
[www.nass.usda.gov/mi](http://www.nass.usda.gov/mi)

USDA Rural Development  
[www.rurdev.usda.gov/mi/](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mi/)  
Phone: 800-944-8119

Farm Service Agency  
[www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)

MSU Extension  
[www.msue.msu.edu](http://www.msue.msu.edu)

MSU Product Center  
(Commercialization Assistance)  
[www.productcenter.msu.edu](http://www.productcenter.msu.edu)  
phone: 517-432-8750

MSU Agriculture Weather Office  
[www.agweather.geo.msu.edu](http://www.agweather.geo.msu.edu)

Emerald Ash Borer  
[www.michigan.gov/eab](http://www.michigan.gov/eab)  
Phone: 866-325-0023

West Nile Virus  
[www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases](http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases)  
Phone: 888-668-0869

Bovine Tuberculosis  
[www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases](http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases)  
Phone: 517-373-1077

